

MEDIA ALERT

KANAKUK SURVIVORS TO TESTIFY AT HEARING ON BILL TO REGULATE MISUSE OF NONDISCLOSURE AGREEMENTS IN CIVIL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE CASES

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (February 24, 2025)-- This Wednesday, the Missouri House Judiciary Committee will hear [HB 709](#) in House Hearing Room 5. The upcoming hearing is scheduled for February 26th at 12:00 p.m. and is available to watch live [here](#). The bill filed by [Rep. Brian Seitz](#) (R) and referred to as “[Trey’s Law](#)” seeks to prohibit the misuse of nondisclosure agreements (“NDAs”) against child sexual abuse (“CSA”) and trafficking victims in civil settlement agreements. Several victims of Kanakuk Kamps, a summer camp ministry based in Rep Seitz’s district, are expected to testify alongside other survivors of child sexual abuse and their advocates. A public petition launched in March 2021 protesting Kanakuk’s use of NDAs has gained nearly [30,000 signatures](#) to date.

Legislators and advocates in various states have referred to this legislation as “Trey’s Law,” in honor of [Trey Carlock](#), who died by suicide in 2019 after being groomed and abused from ages seven to 17 by convicted sex offender and former Kanakuk director, Pete Newman. Trey’s older sister, Elizabeth Carlock Phillips, is a crime victim advocate and has [testified](#) that her late brother was silenced to his grave by a restrictive NDA following a retraumatizing civil litigation process with Kanakuk and its insurers. Newman is in prison in Jefferson City, Mo. for three life terms and was just [denied parole](#) upon first eligibility in September 2024.

Phillips of Dallas, Texas, is expected to testify in support of the bill at Wednesday’s hearing, along with Joe Alarcon of Amarillo, Texas, and Keith Dygert of Branson, Mo. Alarcon’s son was also abused by Newman, and his family was federally sanctioned by Kanakuk for refusing to sign an NDA as part of their settlement agreement, as chronicled in this Emmy Award-winning [Vice News](#) piece. Dygert was also abused by Newman and has [previously testified](#) in committee that he reached a settlement agreement with an NDA “at a time when only a small portion of the story was actually known.”

“Kanakuk abuse survivors are grateful to Rep. Seitz and for taking action upon hearing victims’ stories of being legally silenced after enduring horrific crimes perpetrated in his district. This practice must end, and Missouri should and can lead on this,” Phillips said.

NDAs (also known as non-disparagement or confidentiality clauses) are part of a larger settlement agreement or a standalone contract wherein one or more parties agree that certain information will remain confidential. While NDAs were created to keep proprietary business information, such as trade secrets or sensitive client information, confidential, they have since become standard practice in civil settlements related to child sexual abuse and trafficking. As a result, survivors are forbidden to share their stories to various extents, depending on the language in a particular settlement agreement. Organizations such as [NDA Free](#) have sparked a movement against this practice.

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While 17 states and U.S. Congress (via the "[Speak Out Act](#)") have clarified the law on NDAs for witnesses and adult survivors of sexual harassment in the workplace, Tennessee is the only state to pass [legislation](#) specific to prohibiting the misuse of NDAs in civil CSA settlements, rendering them "void and unenforceable." Versions of "Trey's Law" have also been filed in Texas this session.

Silencing CSA victims with NDAs in Missouri has gained attention in recent years. Kanakuk Kamps has garnered international attention for using NDAs as recently as 2023 in CSA settlements, despite denying the practice for more than a decade. Clergy abuse and reports of CSA within Boy Scouts and "troubled teen" programs in Missouri have also made headlines. This broader survivor community has joined [Kanakuk victims to testify](#) at hearings during prior legislative sessions, advocating for civil statute of limitations reform. Currently, a victim of CSA is barred from suing in Missouri's civil courts past the age of 26 years old (for cases against liable institutions) or 31 years old (for cases against direct perpetrators). [HB1132](#) (Rep. Cameron Parker) and [SB589](#) (Sen. Brad Hudson) were filed this session to address the statute of limitations in Missouri for civil CSA cases.

Wednesday's hearing is the next step toward HB709 reaching a House floor vote, should the committee decide to pass HB709. After a House floor vote, the bill would still need Senate approval to pass the General Assembly and reach the Governor's desk to be signed into law. The public is invited to attend or submit written testimony and witness forms [here](#).

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